

CENTRAL INTELLIGENCE AGENCY

INFORMATION REPORT

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SECURITY INFORMATION

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COUNTRY Korea
SUBJECT Plague of Crop-Destroying Worms
in North Korea

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1. In early May 1953 an unidentified type of crop-destroying worms appeared in North Korea. The worms resembled a centipede. They were black, four to five centimeters long and had a bad odor. Taedong-gun and Pyongwon-gun in South Pyongan Province were hit the hardest. Other areas affected were South Pyongan Province, Kangwon Province, Hwangju, Sariwon, Wonsan, Ch'ilwon (?), and Kowon (N 39-26, E 127-15) (CG-4966). The plague reached its greatest intensity from 10 June to 27 June 1953. During this time the worms consumed approximately one-half of the dry crops, such as millet, sorghum and corn. The rice crop was not seriously affected because of the water in the paddies.
2. During 2 May - 27 June 1953 school children, government workers, and one member from each family were recruited to fight off the worms. The people swept the worms together with brooms and buried them. They also dug ditches around fields to intercept the worms. No chemicals were used.
3. The worms were referred to as "Heaven Worms", because the people believed the worms rained down from the sky. It was also rumored that the worms may have been dropped from United Nations planes.

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